

2016 **Legislative**

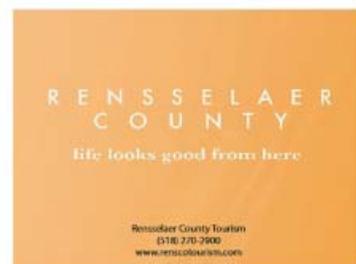
Roundtable Breakfast

Capital Region

Thursday, February 11, 2016

Renaissance Albany Hotel

co-sponsored by:



Capital Region Legislative Roundtable Breakfast

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Renaissance Albany Hotel

144 State Street, Albany, NY 12207

8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Program

8:30 a.m.

Registration & Breakfast Buffet

9:15 - 10:00 a.m.

Welcome:

Introduction of State & Local Leaders

Presentation of State Issues

Jan Marie Chesterton, *President, NYS Hospitality & Tourism Association*

Presentation of Regional Issues

Michele Vennard, *President and CEO, Albany Co Convention & Visitors Bureau*

Mark Eagan, *CEO, Capital Region Chamber*

Philip Morris, *CEO, Proctors*

Christine Golden, *Assistant for Government Relations, Rensselaer County Tourism*

Todd Garofano, *President, Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau*

Todd Shimkus, *President, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce*

Networking Opportunities with State and Local Elected Officials

New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association

The New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association (NYSH&TA) is a not-for-profit trade organization representing nearly 1,000 lodging properties, totaling over 122,000 guest rooms, or 70% of total guest room inventory in the state. NYSH&TA's membership is also comprised of approximately 50 parks and attractions, over 100 industry suppliers, and more than 100 cooperating organizations, tourism educators, students and individuals combined. Founded in Saratoga Springs in 1887, NYSH&TA's mission is to lead and protect the New York State hospitality and tourism industry by providing advocacy, education, and resources. The Association provides: **representation and advocacy** on behalf of the industry before state lawmakers and regulatory agencies; **resources** in the form of money-saving programs, networking opportunities and marketing exposure via the website; **educational offerings** that help members best serve their customers.

Statewide Issues

Illegal Hotels – Leveling the Playing Field

The short-term online rental market—in which individuals rent out rooms, apartments, or entire homes to overnight guests—poses a threat to consumers, neighborhoods and businesses. In response to the growing trend of companies, like Airbnb, promoting illegal owner-occupied hotels within the state, the state's lodging industry is looking to provide a statutory solution in New York to limit and potentially prohibit their impact on the legal hospitality industry.

NYSH&TA suggests reasonable changes or modifications should be made to existing laws or implemented independently, because travelers and communities deserve the proper safeguards that protect them from the potential dangers and risks posed by the short-term online industry. NYSH&TA continues to work with government to develop legislation that would combat these unregulated short-term rentals within New York by requiring compliance with state and local hotel laws. Last fall, in conjunction with the Senate, NYSH&TA held a series of informal roundtables to gather information from the industry on ideas, thoughts and solutions, as to best address and advance state legislation during the 2016 Legislative Session.

In 2010, the State Legislature enacted stricter fire safety standards for Class B or transient use dwellings for hotels only in New York City. NYSH&TA continues to support not only the New York City hotels, but the City of New York in both its efforts to enforce the law and its efforts to eliminate illegal hotels while doing so practically, allowing well-established legal hotels to convert their certificates of occupancy and remain in compliance.

Minimum Wage

In his 2016-2017 State Budget, Governor Cuomo has proposed a statewide minimum wage increase of \$15 per hour by 2018 in NYC and by 2021 for the rest of the state. In New York State, if the minimum wage is raised, the law requires that a wage board be called regarding the minimum wage of food service workers. Therefore, if an increase in the statewide minimum wage happens this year, a wage board will be called for food service workers. NYSH&TA supports the New York State Restaurant Association's (NYSRA) efforts to obtain a "5-year freeze" on any new wage board being called if the statewide minimum wage is raised. While as an industry we support a fair minimum wage, it is important to note that such increases negatively impact job creation and expansion of business across the state.

The federal minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour, and the minimum wage in New York is currently \$9.00 per hour. In 2015, two separate wage boards convened by the Governor and approved by then Acting Labor

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Commissioner Mario Musolino approved minimum wage increases for tipped wage workers (\$7.50 per hour), and to \$15 per hour the minimum wage for fast food workers by 2018 (NYC), and 2021 (NYS).

As of 1/1/2016, the minimum wage for all tipped workers is now \$7.50 per hour, and the minimum wage for fast food workers is \$9.75 per hour statewide and \$10.50 per hour in New York City.

Tourism Funding

Given its proven track record as a revenue source for state and local governments, and as a job generator, Tourism is not only a wise investment, but a critical one that yields unmatched and well sustained returns for New York's economy. To that end, The Governor has called for an unprecedented \$50M be spent on tourism promotion in the coming year. Additionally, the 2016-2017 Executive Budget, appropriates the following direct spending for tourism:

Tourism Matching Grants: \$3.815M (-\$500K from Enacted Budget Last Year)

I Love NY: \$2.5M

Market NY: \$5M

Taste NY: \$1.1M

Welcome Centers (Binghamton and Beekmantown): \$196K (each)

These funding mechanisms from the Governor and Legislature are critical, so that the industry, along with its State and local partners, continues to flourish.

The tourism industry will be asking Legislature to **fund the Tourism Matching Grants Program at \$5 million**, a funding level not realized since 2008-2009.

Paid Family Leave

The Governor's Executive Budget contains a proposal for 12 weeks of job-protected, employee-funded leave to be used for bonding with a new child or caring for a sick relative. NYSH&TA remains concerned that a proposal mandating paid family leave would encourage absence from the workplace, and will more than likely cause mandatory overtime for other employees. Additionally, many New York State employers already provide paid family leave and incur substantial expenses in doing so, but are not bound by the terms of any mandates or statutes.

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Capital Region Legislative Issues 2016

Filming tax credits

The Capital Saratoga region has benefited from both large and small film projects. NYS Film Tax credits however are not available in all of the regions counties. In order to maximize the economic impact of filming business all regional partners request that film tax credits be extended to both Rensselear and Saratoga counties.

Rideshare and the sharing economy

Capital Saratoga Regional partners enthusiastically support legislation (current bill number 06090A) that will allow ride sharing companies like Uber and Lyft to operate outside New York City.

Taxi service

While regional partners are encouraging ride share, their services should be only a part of the region's transportation portfolio. A dedicated group of community leaders have been looking for a solution to professionalize taxi services and make it simpler for taxi companies to operate in the region. This regional solution would simplify the licensing and inspection of taxi cabs and provide one centralized entity to perform these tasks. The group will continue to develop the process which may require legislative action.

CDTA

Another important element of the region's transportation portfolio is public transit. CDTA has made great strides in developing a true transit system and we support the expansion of Bus Plus (Bus Rapid Transit) to connect our region efficiently.

Train service and bikes on trains

Many of our regional tourism assets are rural and offer great opportunity for outdoor adventure. Also, the New York City market is an important one for the region to draw from. We continue to ask that bicycles be allowed on to be either rolled on or checked as luggage in New York State.

Short-term rental unit's regulation parity

We join our tourism colleagues in asking for parity in the unregulated short-term rentals of rooms and homes being posted on websites. Our hotel partners have health, safety, tax and insurance law requirements that do not apply to these private rentals. For issues of safety and fairness we support the call for legislation.

Specific Sponsor Issues

Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a private not for profit organization represents the hospitality industry within Albany County while working closely with other regional partners to increase tour, travel and conference spending to the greater Capital- Saratoga and Hudson Valley regions. Regional (6 county) traveler spending in 2014 was \$1.82 billion generating \$224.1 million in state and local taxes and providing 22,514 regional jobs, 10,464 in Albany County alone. Bureau staff acts as the sales staff and spokesperson for visitor related businesses; provides services to visitors, clients and members and helps to foster a positive visitor experience.

New York State Convention Center / The Albany Capital Center - Approval to proceed with a Convention Center in Albany was provided by the Executive Branch in 2013. Construction is well underway and completion is scheduled for early 2017. Work has commenced to assure a close working relationship with both the County owned Times Union Center, The Empire State Plaza and Egg as well as the adjacent Renaissance Hotel to achieve maximum economic impact. **It is also imperative that the legislature both county and state work together to assure the continued reauthorization of the 6% hotel occupancy tax before its expiration at the end of 2016.** These funds are used for marketing and research, debt service on the Times Union Center and for the planning and operations of the new center. Any time gap in this funding would be detrimental to all facilities. **The NYS Assn of Counties is asking that counties be allowed to renew their existing local sales tax rates without state legislative approval and extend this to other home rule (such as hotel occupancy tax) revenue options. The ACCVB supports this issue and encourages timely renewal of the current tax.**

Maintain and Grow strong regional and statewide tourism marketing programs - Governor Cuomo continues to take a keen interest in travel and tourism and has provided additional funding through the Regional Economic Development Councils, increasing and adding funding to statewide tourism programs. This is encouraging since little attention had been provided to this economic giant in the past few years. Approximately \$10 million was awarded to tourism related projects in the last round. A tourism task force was developed to help guide these decisions. *The ACCVB is fortunate to receive a grant (\$125,000) to support upcoming collegiate sports business through 2017.* **Since all grants are reimbursable, the ACCVB would like to recommend the development of a revolving loan fund that would encourage smaller organizations with important programs to apply for CREDC grants. There is precedent within other REDC's.**

Maintain the ILNY Matching Funds program - Working together as Tourism Promotion Agencies, we have developed strong cooperative programming that could only be accomplished with the infusion of matching funds. It is a legislative initiative which must be maintained. **We support the request of the Tourism Industry Coalition to fund the program at \$5 million in 2016-17.**

Transportation - A group of local leaders including Assembly members have begun to meet to explore the opportunity to create a more comprehensive transportation program that will affect the taxi services in our region. This issue is scheduled to begin to take shape in 2017 providing a simplified, set of standards that will positively impact the immediate Capital Region. Further, it is anticipated that ride sharing (Uber, Lyft, etc.) will be debated and hopefully passed in the NYS Legislature in 2016 so that those services can be provided in upstate New York. The ACCVB is in full support of this legislation and action to help complete our transportation portfolio.

Capital Region Chamber

The Capital Region Chamber represents 2,800 businesses and organizations from throughout the region that employ more than 150,000 area residents. Our mission is to be a unifying force to provide greater influence and opportunities for our members and our Capital Region communities.

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Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce is the official Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) for both Fulton and Montgomery Counties tourism programs. Fulton County is a member of the Capital Saratoga vacation region as designated by I LOVE NY. With 44 lakes and 74,832 acres of wild forest, partially located in the Adirondack Park, Fulton County Tourism focuses on the great outdoors and all of its aspects including fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, boating, and more. Agritourism and history are also vital to our tourism market.

Rensselaer County Tourism Advisory Board

The Rensselaer County Tourism Advisory Board is comprised of members from all sectors of the tourism industry who meet on a bi-monthly basis. The Tourism Advisory Board meetings provide a venue for tourism entities both small and large an opportunity to network and partner to the benefit of both. The tourism entities join together to cross promote and collaborate to improve the visitor's experience. Rensselaer County is an active participant in both the Capital Saratoga and Hudson Valley regional tourism groups which provides Rensselaer County the opportunity to market tourism venues and events in a broader market.

Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce

The Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce has nearly 2,300 members who employ more than 65,000 people. Besides networking and educational events, International trips and advocacy, the Chamber also serves as Saratoga County's Tourism Promotion Agency. Each year, the Chamber creates and manages the County's marketing program seeking to attract visitors from around the world to visit Saratoga County year-round.

Reprivatization of NYRA as a Not-for-Profit Corporation – In 2012, the New York State Racing Association Board was established for a three-year period. The 2015-2016 State Budget extended the maximum term of this Board for an additional year. The Reorganization Board has done a good job and served its purpose, but the continuation of this board is raising serious questions about its ability to make the necessary long term decisions and planning that are essential for the continued success and stability of the Thoroughbred Horse racing industry in New York State. In particular, we in the Capital-Saratoga Region are very concerned about the potential negative impact on the Saratoga Race Course. The Saratoga Race Course had a total economic impact of 3,500 jobs, \$84 million in earnings, and \$237 million in sales in 2014 up from an estimated \$211 million in 2011. A not-for-profit corporation is best suited to build upon the success of the publicly controlled temporary Reorganization Board and to invest in initiatives that will grow the fan base, establish a global betting exchange, resolve the futures of Aqueduct and Belmont, and how VLT funds for Capital improvements at all three NYRA race tracks shall be used for the best interests of all stakeholders. We, hereby, call upon all parties to live up to the promise made to New York's citizens and to adopt a plan to return all Thoroughbred racing operations to a reorganized not-for-profit NYRA by October of 2016 or sooner.

Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau

As a key economic development engine for this community, the mission of the Saratoga Convention & Tourism Bureau is to contribute a positive impact on the local economy by promoting and marketing Saratoga Springs & Saratoga County as a world class destination for meetings, conventions and groups.

Schenectady County Visitors Agency

Schenectady County Visitors Agency is a nonprofit corporation under the auspices of Proctors and serves as Schenectady County's official tourism promotion agency (TPA), as well as a marketing representative of the Capital-Saratoga Region Tourism Commission. SCVA's mission is to promote the county as a travel and tourism destination and ideal location for meetings and conventions.



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